

Opinionpanel Research - Press release

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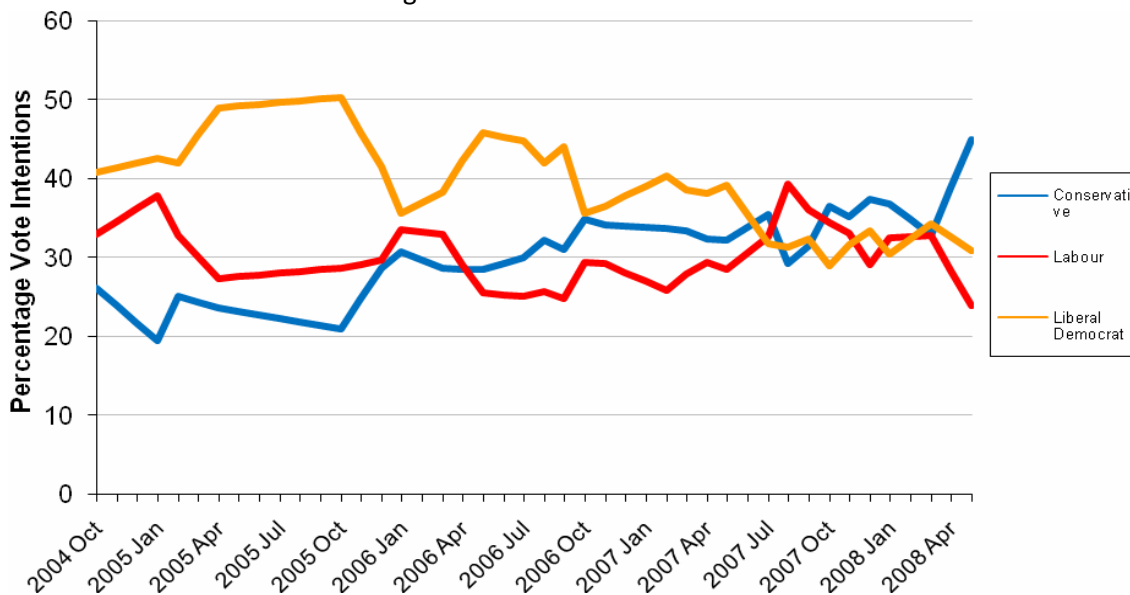
Collapse in Labour student vote

The most recent wave of the Opinionpanel *Student Voting Study* shows student support for Labour has dropped dramatically. By contrast, the Tory vote among students has been growing since David Cameron's October 2005 speech to Conservative Party Conference. Conservative students now outnumber Labour on campus by almost two to one (45% v 24%).

These polls are based on the full time undergraduate student population who represent around a million potential voters. Students are an influential group so shifts in their political allegiance are likely to impact on the views of both the next generation of voters¹ and the future political scene – today's students are going to be tomorrow's higher earners and opinion leaders. David Cameron will be no doubt be delighted by his party's change in fortunes among students - so famously radically anti-Tory in the days of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. However, when Tony Blair left office the Labour vote recovered dramatically – could the same turn out to be true for Gordon Brown?

Opinionpanel are the student research specialists. They have been taking regular polls of student intention to vote and party preference over the past four years. In total 33 waves of research have been conducted with nationally representative samples of students. This is a unique data set, the vast majority of which has never been released before.

The most striking finding from these surveys is that the Liberal Democrats are much more popular among students than they are among voters in general. Nonetheless, the forces which influence electoral change in Britain also influence students: over the last four years the Conservatives have gained support among students as they have in the wider electorate, and now have a decisive lead over the government.



¹ Recent research by the Sutton Trust has shown that 72% of 11–16 year olds believe they are likely to enter higher education even though, in reality, only around 43% will end up doing so before they turn thirty (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2005/06)

Each wave of the research is based on representative samples of full-time undergraduate students at publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the UK. Quotas are set for course year, gender and university type (based on a convenience distinction between Russell Group universities, other old universities, new universities and specialist HEIs). Each wave of research is comprised of approximately 1,000 students and in each wave students from approximately 130 HEIs take part. All samples are taken from The Student Panel – Opinionpanel Research's proprietary panel recruited annually. In total, the panel is comprised of around 60,000 respondents, all of whom receive a small reward (normally £1 in Amazon vouchers) for each questionnaire they complete.

Links

[The Student Vote](#) - The first comprehensive analysis of the political views of the student population over a four year period – by **Paul Whiteley, Professor of Government, the University of Essex**

[Key dates](#) - In British politics during the run of the study

[Demographic trends](#) – An analysis of student party preference by key demographics

[Data tables](#) – Data analysis of key student voting questions and demographics over 33 waves

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